

Phonological Awareness

The ability to listen closely is a key ingredient of phonemic awareness. Children may not necessarily understand what “listen closely” means, this is a learned skill.

The Listening Game

- Bring your child’s attention to noises.
- Sit or lie quietly with your child. It’s not naptime, but it’s a great time to unwind, which is important for young children.
- As you sit or lie there quietly for five to ten minutes, listen for sounds. Stay perfectly still and quiet. Become “sound spotters.”
- Don’t use your eyes – use your ears. There are always sounds and weird noises you can hear. You may hear the air conditioner, doors closing, people talking, stomachs growling. The possibilities are endless!
- Your part is to talk about the sounds you and your child hear. Use a little parent enthusiasm and exaggeration to get your child interested in this activity.
- The key phrase is, **“Who can spot a sound with their ears?”**

Rhyming

Rhyming is such a great phonemic awareness activity! Most children easily grasp the concept of rhyme. Some need a little help, though. Using word-play with rhyming helps children notice that sounds in our language have meaning and follow certain patterns. Again, this is a precursor skill to seeing sound patterns reproduced in print – as a phonemic awareness practice, it is purely auditory.

- Introduce rhyming to your students by reading lots of fun rhyming books, poems, and songs.
- Act silly and have fun! The more fun you have with the rhymes, the more the kids will notice the rhymes and enjoy the activities.
- Exaggerate the silliness of the rhyme.
- The poem “Down By the Bay” and the book “Silly Sally” are perfect examples of how rhyme can be super fun!

Syllables

Working with and noticing syllables within words is important, because it makes students aware of how words can be split up into smaller parts, according to their sounds.

- The ultimate goal is to work on individual phonemes (vowels or consonants)
- Children must first learn the concept of “parts of words.”
- Start with larger parts of words and then work their way down to the smaller
- Discrete individual sounds of phonemes.
- This is building a bridge from hearing words to hearing phonemes.

Word Identification

- Count the number of words in a spoken sentence.
- Say the first line of a nursery rhyme (for example Mary had a Little Lamb).
- Then using your fingers, count out the words together.

Beginning Sounds Play “I am going on a camping trip.”

- Start the game by saying, “I am going on a camping trip and I am going to bring a dog and a dandelion. What are you going to bring?”
- The child should think of something that also starts with the d sound.
- Remember, this game is all about sounds, not letters! For example, if the sound you chose is /s/ and the child says “circus” that would be correct.

Segmenting/Blending

- Choose a word with three sounds (fan).
- Say each sound separately.
- Have your child use the markers and sound boxes.
- Tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, Dr. Seuss books, and other rhyming books are a great way to develop these skills.

Phonics

Playing with Letters: Make a Menu

In this game, your child will pretend to run her own bakery, but instead of cooking with flour and sugar, she'll be mixing letters together in her blender or bowl to make words.

1. Set it Up. Using the letter cards
2. No bakery would be complete without menus. Give your child some construction paper and markers, and ask her to write down the items she has available, so her customers can order what they want.
3. Suggestions could be similar to the following list:

Cat	Bed	Hut
Hat	Red	Cut
Tip	Hop	
Sip	Top	

4. Mix it Up!: Have your little chef get out her toy blender (or a large mixing bowl and spoon) and put all of the letter tiles inside.
 - As the customer, it's your job to shout out your "order." When she hears the word, your chef should mix her ingredients, then look inside the bowl for the letters in the item you've ordered.
 - For example, if you order "cat", she should search for the letters "C" "A" and "T", then lay them out on the plate and tell you your order's ready.
 - If you arrive at the counter to find that she's spelled the word correctly, pay for your purchase and thank the chef.
 - If the word has mistakes in it, tell her, "That's not exactly what I ordered" and help her figure out how to correct it.
5. Stay Hungry: Reading takes practice, so make sure to build on what your child has learned so far, rather than just doing one word at a time.
 - Place another order, sticking to something in the same word family. For example, if you've just tried "cat," move on to "hat".
 - Repeat this process for each word on the menu.
 - Once your child has mastered everything on the list, help her dream up new words to add to her menu, for example, "bat" or "mat".

Practice Writing the Letters

- Help your child write each letter of the alphabet (26) on index cards or scrap paper.
- Make sure there are at least one extra for each of the vowels in the alphabet (A, E, I, O, U).
- As he or she is writing the letters, have the child say each letter name aloud and remind her of the sound it makes.

Vocabulary

- **Name pictures and objects** – children can write down these nouns from pictures.
- **Describe locations, size, color, shape** – children can take nouns and write adjectives to describe them.
- **Use names and labels on things and pictures.**
- **Classify vocabulary** – children can name things under a topic. For example, Transportation (car, truck, road, train, driver, engineer, etc.)
- **Compound Words** – Rainbow, Butterfly
- **Antonyms (Opposite)** – Hot, Cold
- **Synonyms (Same)** – Fast, Quick, Speedy
- Use new vocabulary to speak and write.
- **Homophones** – words that sound the same but are spelled differently (Tail, Tale). The monkey has a tail. Read me a fairy tale.
- **Homographs** – words that are spelled the same but have different meanings (Read, Read). Will you read me a book? She read me a story before bedtime last night.

Fluency

You can help your child build fluency by working on these skills:

- Intonation – the tone that is used when speaking or reading
- Phrasing - put into a particular form of words. It's important to phrase the question correctly"
- Expressiveness - full of expression; meaningful
- Accuracy/Self-Correct/Self-Monitor – be accurate when pronouncing, correct yourself if pronounced wrong, and monitor yourself with how you say words
- Read books on an “Instructional Level” – ask your child’s teacher for reading level
- Reread familiar books – it is ok to read the same books over and over – it helps with reading
- Listen to books on tape – following along, when possible, helps children to learn how to say the words. If unable to follow along, then listening to books is a different way to read through books
- Poetry – Listening to or reading poetry helps imagination and creativity with words
- Model by reading aloud with your child. Kids of all ages love being read to.

Comprehension

Children must be able to read the words in the text and combine it with what they already know to “think” about what the author is trying to say.

Reading comprehension is NOT just finding the answers in the text. Children must be able to interact with the text, think deeper, analyze, predict and be able to summarize what is written. How can you help your child with reading comprehension?

- Before reading look through the book and find words that your child may not know the meaning.
- Talk about the words with your child.
- Discuss the meaning of words and give examples.
 - For example: I was looking through the book and found the word ecstatic. Ecstatic means very, very happy and excited. I was ecstatic the day you were born. Can you think of a time you were ecstatic?
- Before reading a story with your child, look at the cover.
- Read the title and look at the picture if there is one.
- Talk about what you already know about the topic and try to make a connection with what your child already knows.
 - For Example: Before reading a book on “Desert Animals” you can talk about what your child knows about the desert and animals that live in different areas. Activating this “prior knowledge” helps with reading comprehension.

- While reading help your child make connections to the text.
- When you ask your child a question such as “how would you feel if that happened to you?” or “does this part of the story remind you of our vacation on the beach?”
 - By doing this you’re helping your child make a “text-to-self” connection.
- Encourage your child to make predictions while reading. For Example: “what do you think is going to happen next?”
- Model thoughtful question asking while reading.
 - Stay away from yes/no questions.
 - Use questions such as “why do you think the boy was afraid?” instead of “was the boy afraid?”
- Model what good readers do when they don’t understand what they are reading.
 - “Think-aloud” or verbalize what you are doing. For example: “I’m not quite sure what this means, I am going to go back and read this part again.”
- During and after reading, have your child retell or summarize the text.
- Encourage your child to “make a movie in his or her head” while reading.
 - This strategy is known as mental imagery and helps with reading comprehension.
 - If reading a chapter book with limited pictures on the pages, stop periodically in the story and share with your child how you are picturing the scene and ask him or her to share with you
- Read aloud to your child and read with your child every day!

